



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Log R-0607

Date: May 12, 1989

In reply refer to: R-89-29 and -30

Mr. P. H. Croft
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On March 10, 1988, a hazardous materials car of a Seminole Gulf Railroad freight train derailed near Punta Gorda, Florida.¹ The hazardous materials car derailed near two liquefied petroleum gas cars. The derailment resulted in the evacuation of 300 nearby residents. The National Transportation Safety Board learned of the accident from the Florida State Emergency Management office. No notification was received from the railroad. Despite repeated attempts to contact the railroad for the next several days, no one could be reached.

On April 9, 1986, five unattended covered hopper cars rolled down a Colorado and Eastern Railroad (COE) stub track and collided into an industrial building in Denver, Colorado,² rupturing gas lines, cutting local power, and damaging a PCB transformer. Attempts by emergency service personnel, local police, and later Safety Board investigators to identify not only the railroad but also the owners and operators were unsuccessful. It was not until the following day that a COE representative was identified at the accident site by chance by the manager of the business located in the damaged building.

In both accidents, local firefighters, hazardous materials teams, and emergency service personnel could not locate or contact a railroad representative to identify lading, to assist in the emergency response, or to answer technical questions. When the Safety Board finally obtained telephone numbers, the numbers were not useful. The Safety Board and Federal and State railroad officials also had problems when contacting any shortline officials or employees. Neither railroad complied with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations 840.3, which requires railroads to report certain accidents to the Safety Board within 6 hours.

¹For more information, read Field Accident Brief 23 (attached)

²For more information, read Field Accident Brief 6041 (attached).

The Safety Board has noted the substantial growth in regional and shortline railroads within the last 10 years. In fact, the American Shortline Railroad Association (ASLRA) has increased by over 100 new members. While the Safety Board recognizes the significant contribution the ASLRA has made to the railroad and transportation systems, the Safety Board is concerned about the capabilities of the smaller and newer ASLRA members to coordinate, report, and contact the appropriate authorities in the event of an emergency or dangerous situation. The unique circumstances of the newer and smaller shortline railroads make it imperative that the ASLRA members are informed of the proper procedures and guidelines.

Because of the burgeoning shortline railroads, the Safety Board noted the following conditions common to many of the new shortline railroads:

- Many new shortlines are owned and operated by people with little or no previous railroad experience. They have little knowledge of railroad regulations beyond what is necessary for daily operations. This is particularly true of accident reporting requirements.
- Most new shortlines are very small operations involving switching and short distance haul to and from an interchange point. Frequently, these operations have four or fewer employees. Shortlines with limited hours, operations, and personnel are difficult for the public or the Safety Board to contact in the event of an accident.
- Many new shortlines have yet to establish a stable economic record. Under such uncertain conditions, they are reluctant to invest in communication improvements such as call forwarding telephones, beepers, answering services, or message recording machines.

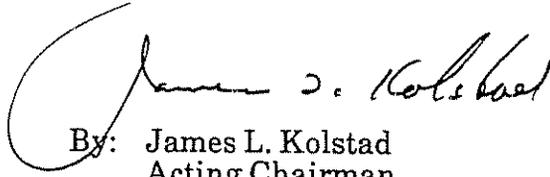
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the American Shortline Railroad Association:

Encourage all member railroads to maintain a 24-hour telephone number and a point-of-contact for public and emergency service use in the event of an emergency or dangerous situation. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-89-29)

Remind its members that all interchange and common rail carriers are required by law to report incidents and accidents to the National Transportation Safety Board as described under Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Section 840.3. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-89-30)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility " . . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations R-89-29 and -30 in your reply

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in these recommendations.



By: James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman

NTSB # ATL88FRZ13

BRIEF OF ACCIDENT

RUNDATE: 05/09/89

File No. - 23

03/10/88

PUNTA GORDA, FL

Time (Lcl) - 1455 EST

---Basic Information---

Reporting Railroad - SGLR
Type of Accident - DERAILMENT
Operating Phase - EN ROUTE
Method of Operation - MANUAL BLOCKS

Property Losses
Railroad - \$ 4,960.00
Non-Railroad - \$ 0.00
Fire - NO

Injuries

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Employees	0	0	0	2
Passengers	0	0	0	0
Motorist	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0

SGLR - SEMINOLE GULF RAILROAD

---Railroad/Personnel Information---

Train Data
Railroad - SGLR
Type of Train - FREIGHT
Train ID - EXTRA 573 SOUTH
Direction - SOUTH
Speed (Est.) - 20
Speed (Auth.) - 20

Train Consist/Damage
No. Loco. Units - 2
No. Cars/Caboose - 40/0
End of Train Monitor - MARKER
Length (Feet) - 2405
Trailing Tons - 1715
Loco. Damaged/Derailed - N/A
Cars Damaged/Derailed - 1/1

Crew Information
Front End - 2
Rear End - 0
Toxicology Performed - NO
Radio Communications
Radio Available - YES
Operational - YES

SGLR - SEMINOLE GULF RAILROAD

---Environment/Operations Information---

Weather Data
Weather Condition - CLEAR
Condition of Light - DAYLIGHT

Itinerary
Last Departure Point
ARCADIA, FL

Hazardous Materials
Involved - YES
Cars Involved - 1

Line of Sight - N/A
Evacuation - YES

Destination
FT. MYERS, FL

Track Information
Type/No. of Tracks - MAIN/1
Gradient - LEVEL
Alignment - CURVE 3 D 30 M

---Narrative---

A SEMINOLE GULF RAILWAY FREIGHT TRAIN HAD ONE OF ITS 40 CARS DERAIL NEAR PUNTA GORDA, FL. THE CAR DERAILED ON CURVED TRACK, AND DURING A POST ACCIDENT INSPECTION WAS FOUND TO HAVE TRUCK SIDE BEARINGS IN CONSTANT TIGHT CONTACT WITH THE CAR BODY. THE DERAILED CAR CONTAINED AMMONIUM NITRATE WHICH DID NOT SPILL. A PRECAUTIONARY EVACUATION OF ABOUT 300 PERSONS WAS ORDERED BY LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS. THERE WAS NO FIRE OR PERSONAL INJURY AS A RESULT OF THE DERAILMENT.

BRIEF OF ACCIDENT, continued

File No. - 23

03/10/88

PUNTA GORDA, FL

Time (Lc1) - 1455 EST

Occurrence #1 - DERAILMENT
Phase - MAINTAINING SPEED

Finding(s)

1. SIDE BEARING - BINDING (MECHANICAL)

---Probable Cause---

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable Cause(s) of this accident is/are finding(s) 1

NTSB # DEN86FR015

File No. - 6041

04/09/86

BRIEF OF ACCIDENT

DENVER, CO

RUNDATE: 10/03/88

Time (Lcl) - 2015 MST

---Basic Information---

Reporting Railroad - COE
Type of Accident - DERAILMENT
Operating Phase - STANDING
Method of Operation - YARD RULES

Property Losses
Railroad - \$ 55,000.00
Non-Railroad - \$ 615,000.00

Fire - NO

Injuries

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Employees	0	0	0	0
Passengers	0	0	0	0
Motorist	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0

COE - COLORADO & EASTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

---Railroad/Personnel Information---

Train Data
Railroad - COE
Type of Train - CUT OF CARS
Train ID - N/A
Direction - WEST
Speed (Est.) - 10
Speed (Auth.) - 0

Train Consist/Damage
No. Loco. Units - 0
No. Cars/Caboose - 5/0
End of Train Monitor - NO
Length (Feet) - N/A
Trailing Tons - N/A
Loco. Damaged/Derailed - N/A
Cars Damaged/Derailed - 2/2

Crew Information
Front End - 0
Rear End - 0
Toxicology Performed - NO

Radio Communications
Radio Available - NO
Operational - N/A

COE - COLORADO & EASTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

---Environment/Operations Information---

Weather Data
Weather Condition - CLOUDY, RAIN
Condition of Light - DARK

Itinerary
Last Departure Point
DENVER, CO

Line of Sight - 750

Destination
DENVER, CO

Hazardous Materials
Involved - NO
Cars Involved - 0

Track Information
Type/No. of Tracks - INDUSTRIAL/2
Gradient - DES. 0.65
Alignment - TANGENT

---Narrative---

FIVE EMPTY COVERED HOPPER FREIGHT CARS ROLLED UNATTENDED DOWN A COLORADO AND EASTERN RAILROAD TRACK IN DENVER, COLORADO. THE TWO LEADING CARS DERAILED OFF THE END OF THE TRACK AND CONTINUED ACROSS A PUBLIC STREET WHERE THEY COLLIDED WITH AN INDUSTRIAL BUILDING. THE CARS WERE PROPERLY SECURED WITH HAND BRAKES WHEN LAST INSPECTED BY RAILROAD PERSONNEL. AFTER THE ACCIDENT THE HANDBRAKES WERE FOUND IN THE RELEASED POSITION.

BRIEF OF ACCIDENT, continued

File No. - 6041

04/09/86

DENVER, CO

Time (Lc1) - 2015 MST

Occurrence #1 - MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER
Phase - STANDING

Finding(s)

1. CUT OF CARS - VANDALIZED
2. HANDBRAKE - RELEASED

Occurrence #2 - DERAILMENT
Phase - UNATTENDED

---Probable Cause---

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable Cause(s) of this accident is/are finding(s) 1, 2